

Message Text

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EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS IF DESIRED

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, US

SUBJ: DEFMIN PERES TAKES HARD LINE

1. SUMMARY. IN CONVERSATION WITH DEFMIN PERES AT MY HOME AUG 28 HE TOUCHED ON A NUMBER OF CURRENT TOPICS--SOVIET NAVAL ACTIVITY (TEL AVIV 4965), RABIN'S FORTHCOMING VISIT, ISRAELI-JORDAN RELATIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS. PERES TOOK A VERY TOUGH STANCE ON ALL THESE SUBJECTS AND, WHILE HIS HARDLINE POSITION IS WELL KNOWN, IT IS INTERESTING THAT HE CHOSE TO EXPRESS IT DIRECTLY TO ME AT THIS TIME. IN A SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION WITH JUSTIC MINISTER ZADOK, LATTER MADE CLEAR THAT CABINET HAD NOT YET DISCUSSED SUBSTANCE OF RABIN'S VISIT AND NEXT STEPS WITH EGYPT AND JORDAN. RABIN PREFERS MOVING FIRST WITH EGYPT, HE SAID, NOTING THERE WERE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION WITHIN CABINET. ZADOK SAID HE THOUGHT CABINET WOULD NOT TIE RABIN'S HANDS RE NEXT STEPS BEFORE HIS VISIT TO WASHINGTON. END SUMMARY.

2. RABIN VISIT. PERES CONFIRMED WHAT HAS BEEN REPORTED IN PRESS, NAMELY THAT HE IS OPPOSED ON SUBSTANTIVE GROUNDS TO EARLY US VISIT BY RABIN. HE SAID CURRENT SITUATION REGARDING POSSIBLE NEGOTIATIONS WAS TOO FLUID FOR GOI TO RISK A WASHINGTON VISIT. HIS FEAR WAS THAT RABIN WOULD BE PRESENTED WITH UNACCEPTABLE CHOICES ON SUCH A VISIT,

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AND STRONGLY IMPLIED THAT US WOULD TIE ISRAELI ACCEPTANCE

OF US POSITIONS AND PRIORITIES TO "FINALIZING" MILITARY SUPPLY AGREEMENTS, WITHOUT THESE, HE SAID, VISIT WOULD BE CONSIDERED SERIOUS FAILURE. WHEN I STRESSED THE MANY POSITIVE ASPECTS OF AN EARLY MEETING BETWEEN RABIN AND PRESIDENT FORD, PERES TENDED TO DISMISS THESE AS "PUBLIC RELATIONS" OF NO IMPORTANCE WHEN COMPARED TO CRITICAL ISSUES OF ISRAELI SECURITY.

3. JORDAN-ISRAELI RELATIONS. PERES DESCRIBED JORDAN-ISRAELI RELATIONS AS VERY SATISFACTORY--A KIND OF ACCEPTABLE STANDOFF. NEITHER ISRAEL NOR JORDAN REALLY HAD TO NEGOTIATE AN AGREEMENT OF ANY KIND. JORDAN COULD LIVE WITHOUT TALKS, HE SAID, BUT HUSSEIN WAS INTERESTED IN THEM TO BOLSTER HIS DOMESTIC POSITION. PERES THINKS HUSSEIN CAN HANDLE SITUATION IF HE WILL ONLY BE TOUGH ENOUGH WITH HIS OPPOSITION. JORDAN HAD LITTLE TO OFFER ISRAEL (EGYPT WAS WHAT COUNTED) AND WHAT JORDAN WANTS--SIGNIFICANT TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS--ISRAEL CANNOT GIVE. WHAT ISRAEL COULD GIVE (PERES IMPLIED SOME FORM OF FUNCTIONAL DISENGAGEMENT) WOULD NOT BE ENOUGH TO SERVE HUSSEIN'S REQUIREMENTS. THEREFORE, IT WOULD BE BETTER TO LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE AND TO CONCENTRATE NOW ON POSSIBLE NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT, WHERE SOMETHING OF EQUAL VALUE MIGHT BE EXCHANGED.

4. PERES' POSITION ON NEGOTIATIONS. TOWARDS END OF OUR DISCUSSION, PERES AGAIN SHOWED A DEEP DISTRUST OF US INTENTIONS RE NEXT STEPS IN MIDDLE EAST. WHEN I REVIEWED CONSIDERATIONS FROM US VIEWPOINT, PERES ACKNOWLEDGED THAT US POSITION MIGHT BE RIGHT FOR US, WHICH HAD MANY FOREIGN POLICY CONCERNS; BUT IT WAS WRONG FOR ISRAEL WHICH HAD ONLY A CONCERN FOR ITS SURVIVAL. PERES SAID BLUNTLY THAT ISRAEL IF NECESSARY WOULD FIGHT RATHER THAN ALLOW BALANCE OF POWER TO SHIFT AGAINST IT, NOR WOULD IT ALLOW ANY GREAT POWER, INCLUDING US OR USSR, TO DETERMINE ITS POLICY IN THIS CRITICAL AREA. WHEN I EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE TO IGNORE LARGER REALITIES, PERES MERELY REMARKED THAT LARGE AND SMALL COUNTRIES WERE BOUND TO HAVE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES.

5. IN AUGUST 29 CONVERSATION WITH MINISTER OF JUSTICE,
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HAIM ZADOK, WHICH DIFFERED IN TONE MARKEDLY FROM THAT WITH PERES, HE TOLD ME THAT CABINET HAD NOT YET DISCUSSED RABIN'S VISIT TO US FROM SUBSTANTIVE POINT OF VIEW. THIS WOULD PROBABLY TAKE PLACE WITHIN NEXT FEW DAYS, HE THOUGHT. UNTIL SUCH A MEETING THERE WOULD BE NO GOI POSITION ON NEXT STEPS RE EGYPT AND/OR JORDAN. HE NOTED THAT INDIVIDUAL MINISTERS HAD THEIR OWN POINTS OF VIEW, SOME OF WHICH WERE STRONGLY HELD AND FORCEFULLY EXPRESSED (HE HIMSELF INCLINES TOWARD

A NEXT STEP WITH JORDAN TO GET AT THE ROOT OF PALESTINIAN PROBLEM). ZADOK ADDED THAT IT WAS HIS PERSONAL OPINION THAT CABINET WOULD NOT RPT NOT SEEK TO TIE RABIN'S HANDS RE NEXT STEPS PRIOR TO VISIT TO WASHINGTON. IN HIS VIEW, RABIN SHOULD AND WOULD BE GIVEN A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF FLEXIBILITY FOR HIS VISIT AS CONCERNS NEXT STEPS. HE STATED, HOWEVER, THAT RABIN HIMSELF CLEARLY PREFERS THAT NEXT STEP BE WITH EGYPT.
KEATING

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